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USAID Mission Director Kevin J. Mullally, center, takes part in a groundbreaking ceremony at the Sinthiou Maleme middle school in southeastern Senegal. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID

USAID Mission Director breaks ground in first of 28 new middle schools for Senegal

USAID/Senegal's Mission Director, Kevin Mullally, joined community members in an official groundbreaking ceremony on November 15 at Sinthiou Maleme middle school in the southeastern Tambacounda region. The event formally marked the second phase of a USAID project that will finance construction or expansion of 28 middle schools through early 2008. Since 2003, the Agency has built or upgraded 30 other rural middle schools, an important contribution allowing Senegalese girls and boys the opportunity to continue their education.

Mullally was greeted in the village by community leaders and scores of teenagers carrying signs bearing messages: "I love the American people," "With the USAID project, girls will stay in school."

"This new middle school will play an important role in the life of your community," Mullally said after laying three concrete blocks, urging residents to draw up precise plans to ensure long-term maintenance of the buildings and equipment. "It will be necessary to promote participative and transparent management of the resources and activities of the school."

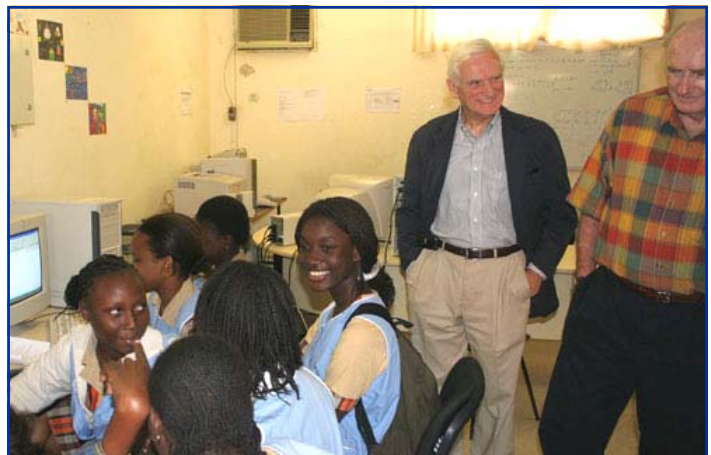
The community, he said, had already shown its commitment to education by providing the site for the new school. "Your determination to invest in the education of our children is the key to a better future."

While on his first field trip to visit USAID projects, Mullally also participated in a handover ceremony of middle school textbooks for the Tambacounda region. Through USAID, the American people have provided Senegal with more than 1 million textbooks. All children attending middle schools in Tambacounda and Senegal's other regions now have new science and mathematics texts in their classrooms



Absatou Diop Diallo of Fatick, the only woman among Senegal's 11 regional education directors, discusses issues confronted by female teachers and administrators with USAID/Senegal Director, Kevin Mullally. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID

In the Fatick region, Mullally opened a workshop in Fatick aimed at encouraging more women to become teachers and school administrators. Among their recommendations, participants at the Fatick workshop called on the government to consider establishing quotas for women teachers and education officials and study possibilities to provide wide-ranging financial and social incentives to encourage more women to pursue a career in education. Only 10% of Senegal's teachers are women.



Thomas Corts, standing, left, the Coordinator of President Bush's International Education Initiative, and Joseph Carney, Director of the Education Office in USAID's Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade Bureau, visit the Cisco Academy co-financed by USAID at Mariama Ba Secondary School on Gorée Island. Corts and Carney were in Dakar for a recent Education for All conference. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID

USAID takes part in Africa Out-side Edge bednet distribution

USAID/Senegal joined up with South African adventurer Kingsley Holgate of National Geographic fame to distribute mosquito nets as part of his 33-country trek around the outside edge of Africa. On November 10, USAID organized and participated in the distribution of 1,500 long-lasting, insecticide-treated bednets on the remote island of Bassoul, nestled in Senegal's western mangroves. Nine hundred nets from the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), and 600 more from corporate sponsors were enough to cover the beds of pregnant women and children under five. Holgate and his team also distributed bednets near Senegal's northern border before crossing into Mauritania.

According to Holgate, a son of a missionary smitten by wanderlust, he was halfway through his voyage to circumvent the continent when he reached Senegal -- 17 countries, 27,000 kilometers and 200 days on the road with 165 remaining for his party of seven traveling in three rugged vehicles. Holgate says his team has also seen "hundreds of campfires and river crossings, buckets of sweat, loads of adventure and tens of thousands of lives already saved and improved through this world-first humanitarian expedition."

After using the expedition's inflatable boats to reach Bassoul, Holgate addressed the entire community with his One Net One Life campaign messages on bednet use, particularly targeting the colorfully dressed women who drove the celebration with drumming and lively dancing. "The saving grace of Africa is the mamas of Africa," he said.

"We will be fighting malaria everywhere in this village," said village chief Ousmane Sarr. He thanked USAID for the bednets and its continued support for Bassoul. USAID financed the construction of a new middle school so that the island's teenagers can continue their education close to home. "We are praying every day for USAID to be all over the world," Sarr said.



A young Senegalese girl on the island of Bassoul dances during a lively bednet distribution ceremony. Long-lasting, insecticide-treated bednets from the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and corporate sponsors will cover the beds of all pregnant women and children under five years of age on this remote island in the pristine mangroves of Senegal's Sine Saloum Delta. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID



South African adventurer Kingsley Holgate distributes insecticide-treated mosquito nets donated through the President's Malaria Initiative on Senegal's remote island of Bassoul. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID

Pape Momar Sow: FSN of the Year



Pape Momar Sow, USAID/Senegal's Education Team Leader, right, was selected as one of two Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) of the Year for Africa. The Agency singled out Sow for his successful efforts to leverage over \$25 million to increase access to middle school education in Senegal. A former teacher and senior educational planner at the Ministry of Education, Sow presented compelling rationale for increasing the amount of U.S. foreign assistance funding from approximately \$3.5 million per year to \$16.5 million. He also persuaded the Government of Senegal (GOS) to match USAID's increased investment dollar-for-dollar in support of middle school education. The additional USAID and GOS investment has helped build and equip 54 rural middle schools, provide textbooks to 600 middle schools, and train more than 4,000 teachers. The other FSN award for Africa goes to Mubarak Khamis Yagoub of USAID/Sudan. Photo by Richard Nyberg, USAID

Read more about USAID/Senegal: senegal.usaid.gov